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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the reading level of students in a college remedial reading and writing class, the gains they made during a semester of instruction, the differences in gains made by students taking the remedial class alone and those taking that class and the normal basic composition course, and the differences in gains made by students taught by instructors of different academic levels. Subjects, 343 students taking both the remedial course and the basic composition course and 181 students enrolled only in the remedial course in the fall semesters of 1980 and 1981, were given the Nelson-Denny Reading test as a pretest and posttest. The pretest results indicated that both groups in both years read at approximately the mid-ninth grade level. Posttest results for both years also indicated average gains of 4 months for both groups. Students taught by new teaching assistants in small classes showed gains approximately double those taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty. The results suggest using standardized tests to place students, creating and requiring special courses for students who read below grade level, employing computer-aided instruction and intensive laboratory work in these courses, and using teaching assistants to teach them. (JL)

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A Study of the Reading Performance of Entering College Freshmen

Carlene Walker

July 8, 1982

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I am grateful to Carl Walker of the Department of Educational Psychology for his help in designing and executing the study.

I wish to thank the instructors in the Department of English who gave the Nelson-Denny Test to their students and kept records of the results. I appreciate the kindness of John Starner, Computer Center Academic Use Coordinator in Summer 1981, in helping me learn to use the computer in the early stages of the study.

Finally, I am especially grateful to Russell Sype, Computer Center Program Adviser, for his handling of the computerized statistical analyses, his careful communication of his interpretation of results in answer to my questions, and his provision of the computer-generated graphs.

Carlene Walker

Abstract

A computerized series of one-way multivariate analyses examined raw scores for 524 students in English 3001 ("Improving Reading/ Writing") who took Forms A and B of The Nelson-Denny Reading Test in Fall 1980 and Fall 1981. Raw scores were interpreted in grade-equivalent scores from the Examiner's Manual, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test. The total sample included 343 students who took English 3001 and English 3110 ("Basic Composition") concurrently and 181 students who took English 3001 alone.

Results showed the pre-test grade equivalency in vocabulary and comprehension for all students in both years to be at approximately the level of mid-ninth grade. Analysis of the distribution of scores showed 75 percent of the students at a level below that of late eleventh grade and 25 percent at a level below the middle of eighth grade. Gains from pre- to post-test for all students in both years averaged four months, and no significant differences existed between subgroups. Gains made in Fall 1981 were slightly smaller than gains made in Fall 1980. Students taught by new teaching assistants showed gains approximately double those made by students taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty.

Results warranted six recommendations for consideration by the Department of English, two recommendations for consideration by other members of the University faculty, and a final recommendation for future study.

I. Background and Summary

Background

Fall 1980 marked the beginning of a course in the Department of English at The University of Texas at El Paso which emphasized basic reading skills. The course, entitled "Improving Reading/Writing" and designated English 3001 after a brief time during which it was known as English 3121, was designed primarily for provisional students and offered three hours of credit for removal of provisional status. (A provisional student is a Texas resident who scores less than 700 on the SAT or 15 on the ACT if in the upper half of his/her senior class or scores less than 800 on the SAT or 18 on the ACT if in the lower half of his/her class.) Regular faculty, lecturers, and experienced and beginning teaching assistants under the supervision of regular faculty taught sections of the course.

Many of the students enrolled in English 3001 also enrolled in English 3110, "Basic English Composition," the first required course in the three-step Freshman English program.

The necessity to provide an objective description of the reading level of 3001 students and a need to assess the effect of concurrent enrollment in two basic English courses led to the administration of the Nelson Denny Reading Test in all English 3001 sections.

The present study, based on results of the test, began in Fall 1980 and was extended through Fall 1981 to provide comparative data.

The study was designed to show (1) the beginning reading level of students in English 3001, (2) gains made during a semester of

instruction, (3) differences in gains made by students taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently and students taking 3001 alone, and (4) differences in gains made by students taught by instructors of different academic levels.

Summary

The study examined scores on Form A and Form B of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test which were taken as a pre-test and post-test, respectively, by 524 students enrolled in English 3001 ("Improving Reading/Writing") in Fall 1980 and 1981. Of the total sample, 343 students (designated the Yellow Group) took English 3110 ("Basic Composition") concurrently with English 3001, and 181 students (designated the White Group) took English 3001 alone.

Matched pairs of raw scores were subjected to a computerized series of one-way multivariate analyses using the SPSS subprogram DISCRIMINANT, with results being interpreted in grade-equivalent scores from the Examiner's Manual, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test.

Analyses determined the mean grade equivalencies on the vocabulary and comprehension pre-test for Yellow, White, and all students; the distribution of grade equivalencies within groups on the pre-test; gains made from the pre-test to post-test; a comparison of gains made by Yellow and White; a comparison of gains made in Fall 1980 and Fall 1981; and a comparison of gains in relation to academic level of instructors.

Results showed the pre-test grade equivalency in vocabulary and comprehension to be at approximately the level of mid-ninth grade for all students in both years. Analysis of the distribution of scores showed 75 percent of the students at a level below that of late

eleventh grade and 25 percent at a level below the middle of eighth grade. Comprehension scores were lower than vocabulary scores for Yellow, White, and all students in both years.

Pre- to post-test gains for the total sample averaged four months. A comparison between the gains made by Yellow and White showed no significant differences. Gains made in Fall 1981 were slightly smaller than those made in Fall 1980.

Students taught by new teaching assistants under the supervision of regular faculty members showed gains approximately double those made by students taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty.

Results of the study warranted six recommendations for consideration by the Department of English and two recommendations for consideration by othe University faculty who teach students similar to those included in the study. The performance of a similar study, using another standarized reading test, was also recommended.

II. Purposes and Procedures

Purposes of the Study

The general purposes of the study were to determine the reading level of students at entry into English 3001, to determine differences between pre- and post-test scores after a semester of instruction, and to assess the effect of certain conditions on these differences. Grade equivalencies of vocabulary, comprehension, and total (vocabulary and comprehension) raw scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test were selected for interpretation of the data.

Six specific questions guided the investigation. They included the following:

1. What were the mean grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension on the pre-test for all students, those taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently, and those taking 3001 alone?
2. What was the distribution of grade equivalencies on the pre-test?
3. What gains were made from the pre- to post-test?
4. How did gains differ for students taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently and students taking 3001 alone?
5. How did gains made in Fall 1980 differ from those made in Fall 1981?
6. How did gains differ for students taught by instructors of different academic levels?

Procedures

The study began in Fall 1980 when the Department of English offered English 3001 ("Improving Reading/Writing") for the first time. All 3001 instructors administered Form A of The Nelson-Denny Reading Test as the pre-test during the first two weeks of the semester. They administered Form B as the post-test during the last two weeks of the semester. Instructors recorded pre- and post-test raw scores and grade equivalencies (from the Nelson-Denny Examiner's Manual) on a special form and placed each student into a category of "Taking 3001 and 3110 Concurrently" or "Taking 3001 Alone."

The investigator, examining forms completed by all instructors in both years, discarded cases for which both a pre- and post-test score were not available. This was done to avoid a possible misinterpretation of results caused by the high attrition rate in the course. Students who took English 3001 and English 3110 concurrently were designated the "Yellow Group" and students who took English 3001 alone were named the "White Group."

The total sample in both years contained 524 matched pairs. The Yellow Group included 155 cases in 1980 and 188 cases in 1981, for a total of 343. The White Group included 100 cases in 1980 and 81 cases in 1981, for a total of 181.

The investigator typed matched pairs of raw scores into the computer, entering separately scores for the Yellow and White groups. Vocabulary, comprehension, and total scores were entered.

Russell Sype, Computer Center Program Adviser, conducted a series of one-way multivariate analyses of variance using the SPSS subprogram

DISCRIMINANT. Because this serial design introduces multiple comparison issues, a Bonferroni-based approach was used to control the overall error rate. Analyses were performed on raw scores to detect group differences. Results were then interpreted in grade-equivalent scores from the Examiner's Manual, The Nelson-Denny Reading Test.

Analyses provided the following information:

1. Mean grade equivalencies of the Yellow Group, the White Group, and all students at time of entry into English 3001.
2. Distribution of grade-equivalencies on the pre-test.
3. Gains made from pre-test to post-test.
4. Comparison of gains made by the group taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow) with gains made by the group taking 3001 alone (White).
5. Comparison of gains made in Fall 1980 with those made in Fall 1981.
6. Comparison of gains in relation to academic level of instructors.

III. Results

This section of the report presents findings of the study as they relate to the following questions:

1. What were the mean grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension on the pre-test for all students, those taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow), and those taking 3001 alone (White)?
2. What was the distribution of grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension pre-test scores?
3. What gains were made from the pre- to post-test?
4. How did gains differ for students taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently and students taking 3001 alone?
5. How did gains made in Fall 1980 differ from those made in Fall 1981?
6. How did gains differ for students taught by instructors of different academic levels?

What were the mean grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension on the pre-test for all students, those taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow), and those taking 3001 alone (White)?

1980 and 1981 combined - Table I summarizes the grade equivalencies of mean scores in vocabulary and comprehension for 524 English 3001 students in 1980 and 1981 combined. On the pre-test, students in both groups and in the combined group scored at a level near the middle of ninth grade, with the exception of White which scored at the level of beginning tenth grade in vocabulary. Between groups,

Table I

Grade Equivalencies, Gain in Months
(Vocabulary and Comprehension)
1980 and 1981 Combined

Group	Vocabulary			Comprehension		
	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain
All Students	9.8	10.2	4	9.5	9.7	2
Yellow (3001, 3110)	9.7	10.2	5	9.4	9.7	3
White (3001)	10.0	10.4	4	9.4	10.0	6

Table II

Summary of Data
Fall 1980

Group	Vocabulary			Comprehension			Total		
	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain
All Students (255n)	10.0	10.5	5	9.4	9.9	5	9.7	10.3	6
Yellow (3001, 3110) (155n)	9.9	10.6	7	9.6	9.8	2	9.7	10.3	6
White (3001) (100n)	10.3	10.7	4	9.4	10.0	6	9.8	10.5	7

Table III

Summary of Data
Fall 1981

Group	Vocabulary			Comprehension			Total		
	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	Gain
All Students (269n)	9.6	10.0	4	9.4	9.6	2	9.6	9.9	3
Yellow (3001, 3110) (188n)	9.6	10.0	4	9.5	9.5	0	9.6	9.9	3
White (3001) (81n)	9.7	10.0	3	9.4	9.8	4	9.6	10.0	4

Yellow scored slightly below White in vocabulary but at the same level in comprehension. For all groups in both years, grade equivalencies in comprehension were lower than in vocabulary.

1980 - Table II summarizes the grade equivalencies of mean scores in vocabulary, comprehension, and total for 255 students taking English 3001 in Fall 1980. On the pre-test, the sample scored at a level between late ninth grade and beginning tenth grade in all areas. Between groups, Yellow showed a grade equivalency slightly below that of White in the three categories, with all scores in a range from the fourth month of ninth grade to the third month of tenth grade. For both groups and the total sample, grade equivalencies in comprehension were lower than in vocabulary.

1981 - Table III summarizes the grade equivalencies of mean scores in vocabulary, comprehension, and total for 269 students taking English 3001 in Fall 1981. On the pre-test, the sample scored at a level between the fourth and seventh months of ninth grade in all areas. Between groups, Yellow and White showed the same grade equivalency in total, while Yellow scored slightly below White in vocabulary but slightly above White in comprehension. All scores were at a level ranging from the fourth to seventh months of ninth grade. For both groups and the total sample, grade equivalencies in comprehension were lower than in vocabulary.

What was the distribution of grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension pre-test scores?

1980 and 1981 combined - Figure 1 shows the distribution of pre-test vocabulary grade equivalencies for Yellow in 1980 and 1981 combined. With a median of 9.6, 50 percent of the group scored

Figure 1

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES VOCABULARY (YELLOW GROUP)

1980 AND 1981 COMBINED

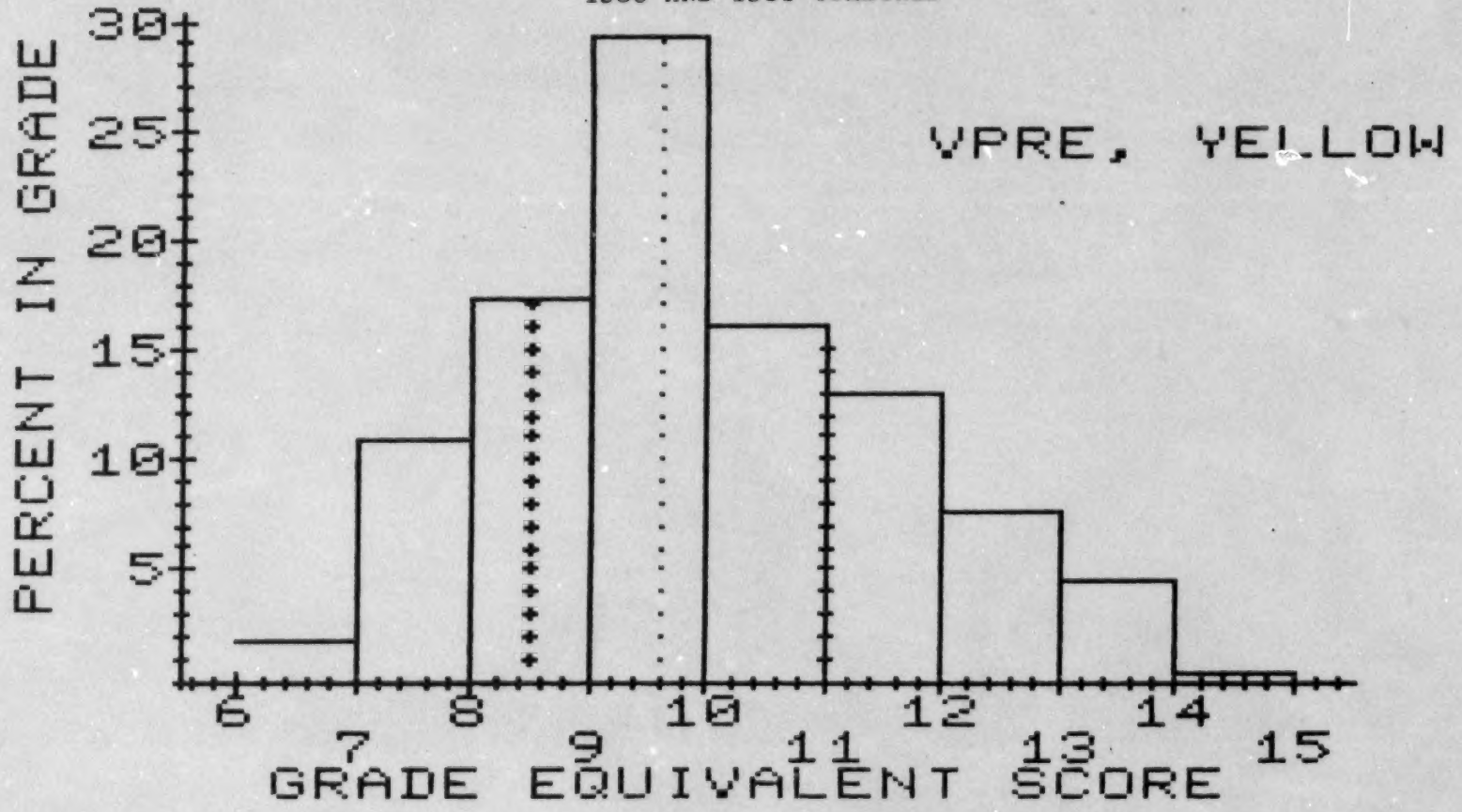


Figure 2

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES COMPREHENSION (YELLOW GROUP)
1980 AND 1981 COMBINED

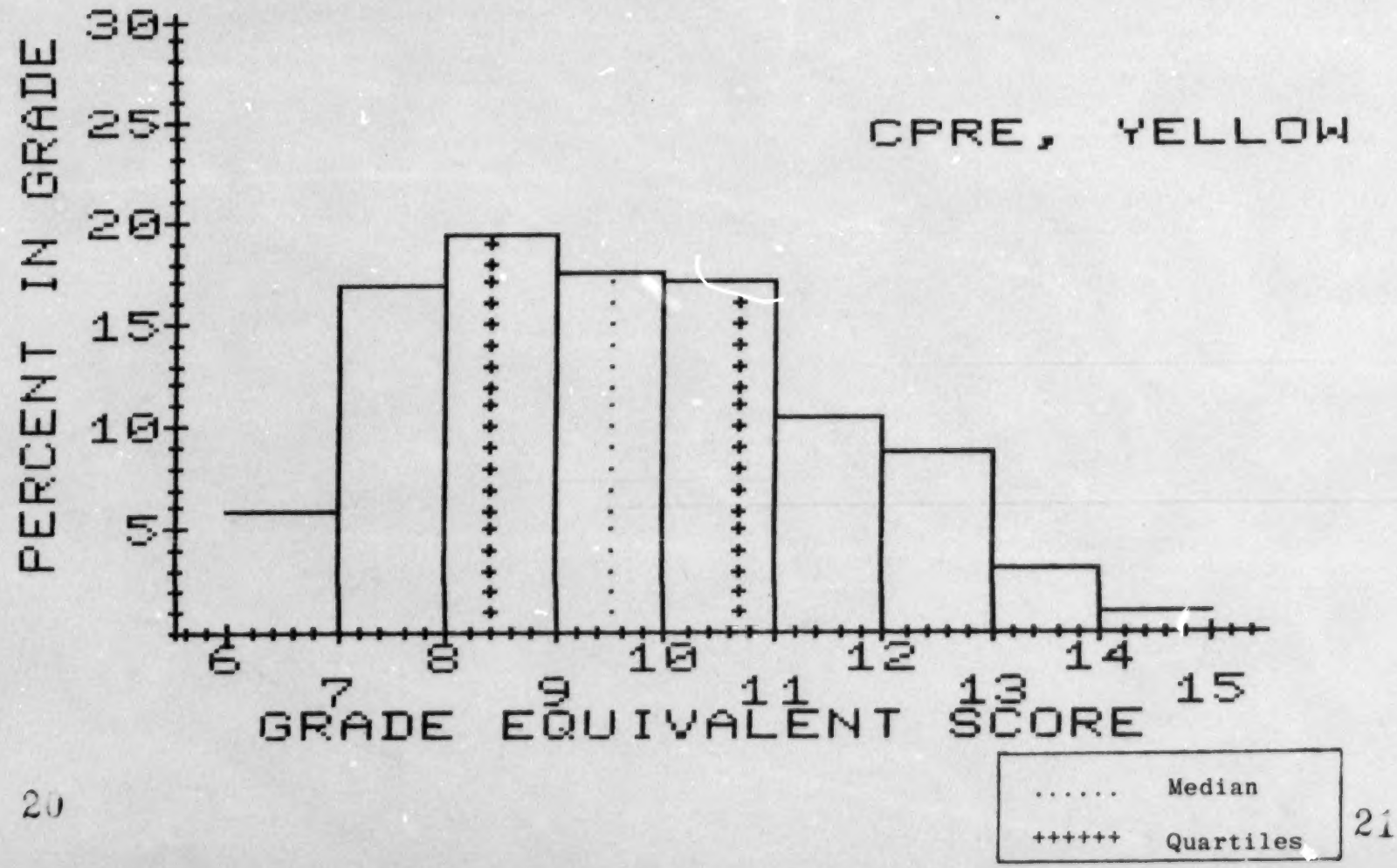


Figure 3

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES VOCABULARY (WHITE GROUP)
1980 AND 1981 COMBINED

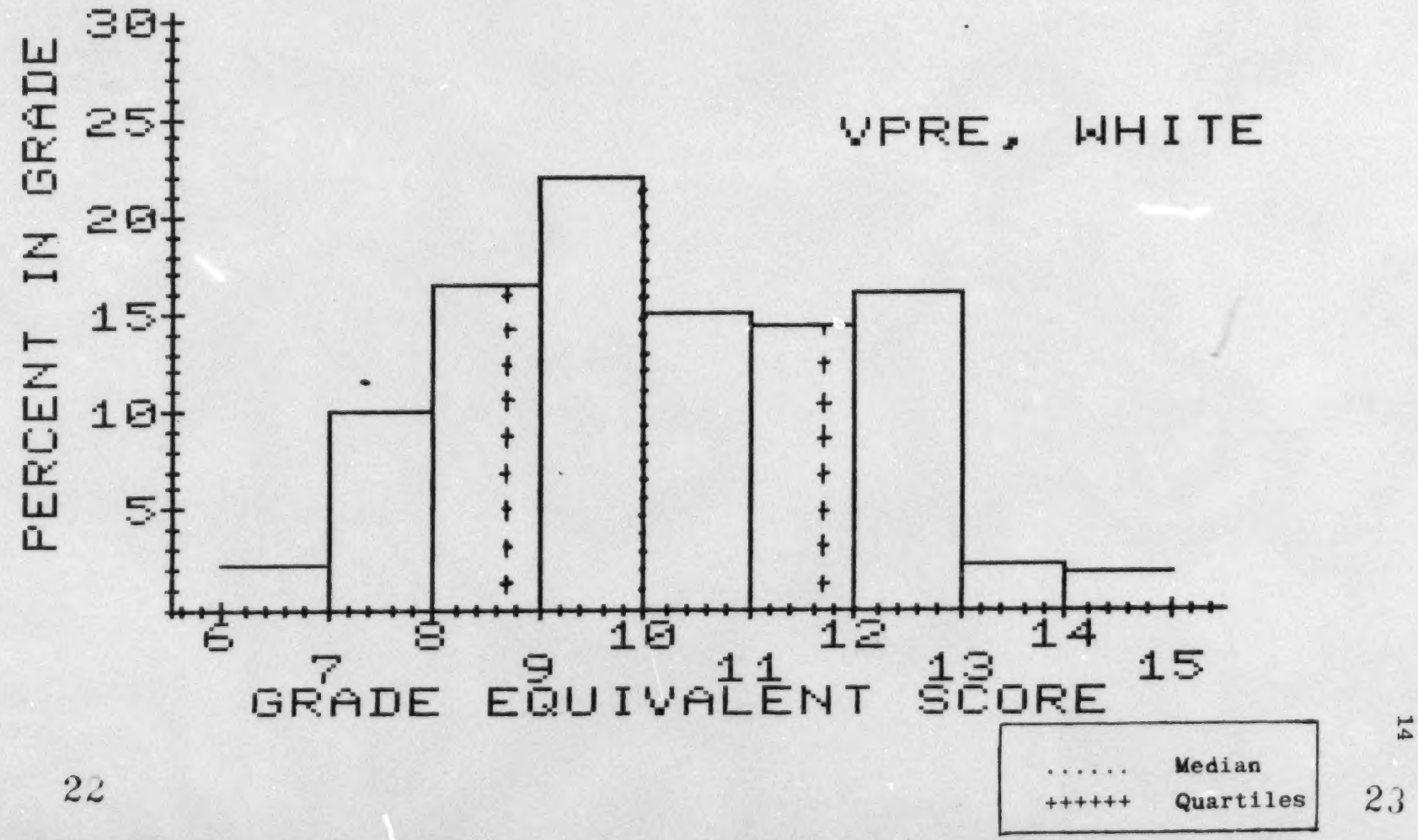
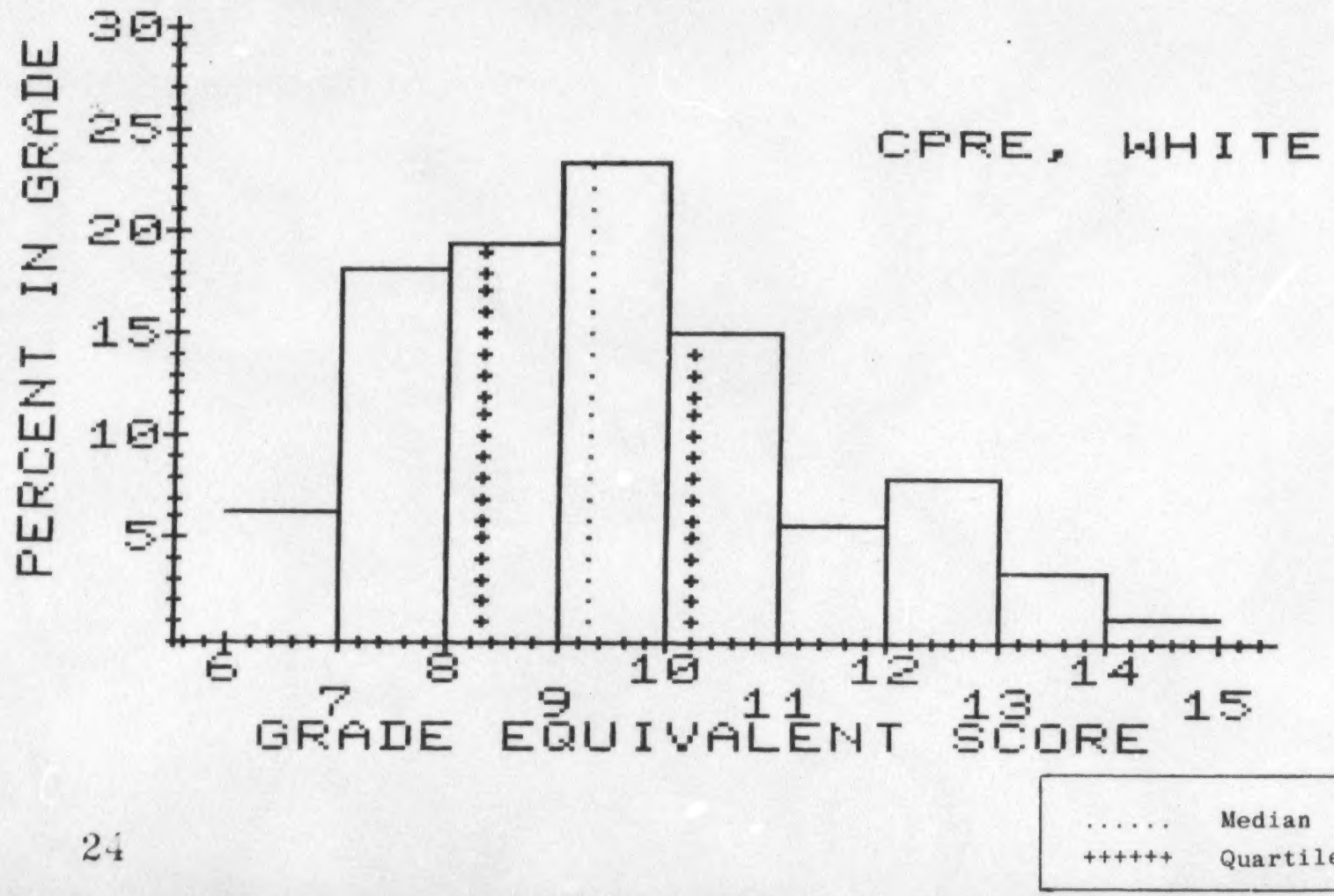
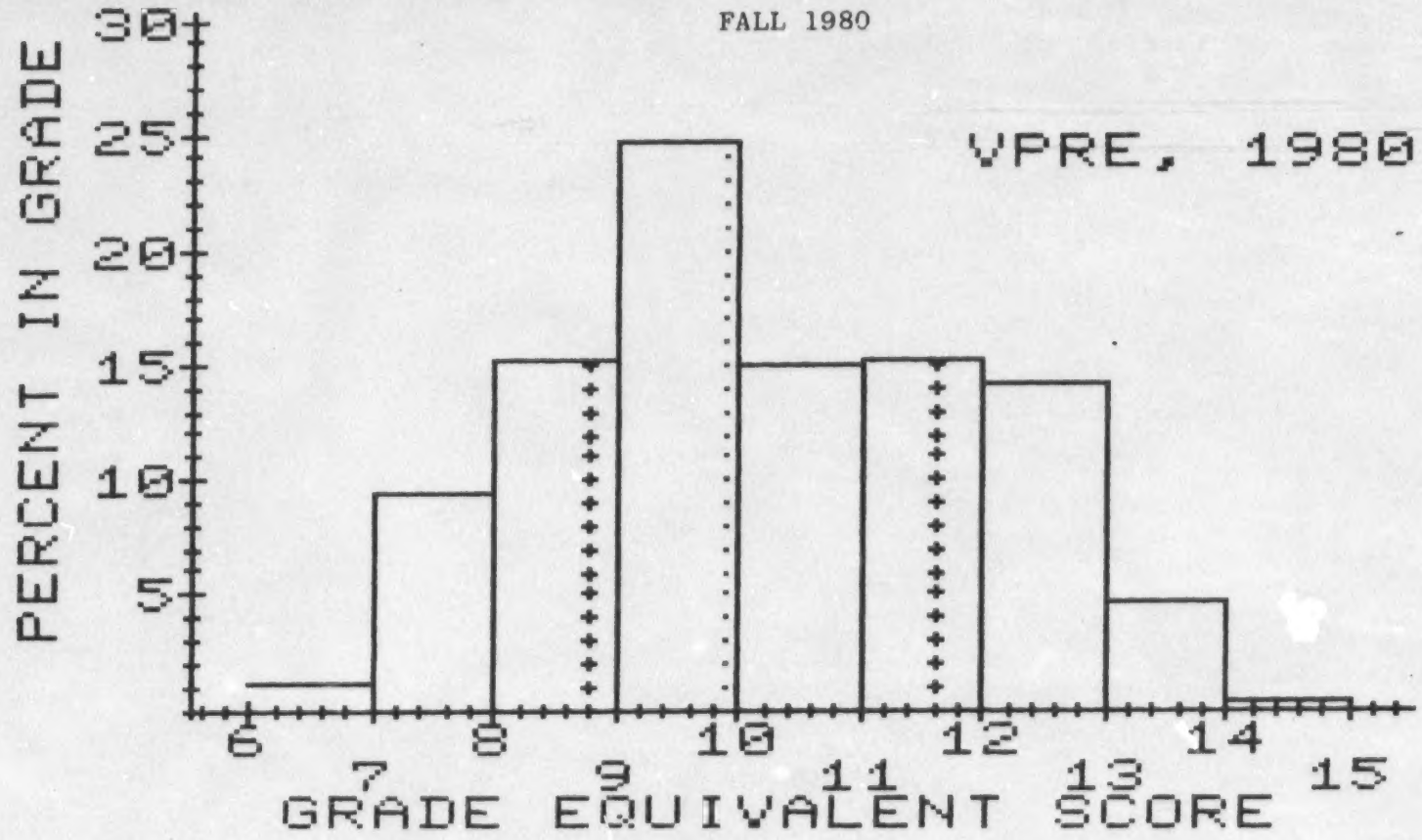


Figure 4

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES COMPREHENSION (WHITE GROUP)
1980 AND 1981 COMBINED



DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES VOCABULARY (ALL STUDENTS)
FALL 1980



..... Median

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below the level of the fifth month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of beginning eleventh grade.

Figure 2 presents the distribution of pre-test comprehension grade equivalencies for Yellow in 1980 and 1981 combined. With a median of 9.5, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the fifth month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the fourth month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of tenth grade.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of pre-test vocabulary grade equivalencies for White in 1980 and 1981 combined. With a median of 10.0, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of tenth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of eleventh grade.

Figure 4 presents the distribution of pre-test comprehension grade equivalencies for White in 1980 and 1981 combined. With a median of 9.3, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the third month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the third month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the second month of tenth grade.

1980 - Figure 5 shows the distribution of pre-test vocabulary grade equivalencies for all students in both groups in 1980, With a median of 9.9, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the ninth month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the eighth month of eighth grade, and 75

Figure 6

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES COMPREHENSION (ALL STUDENTS)

Fall 1980

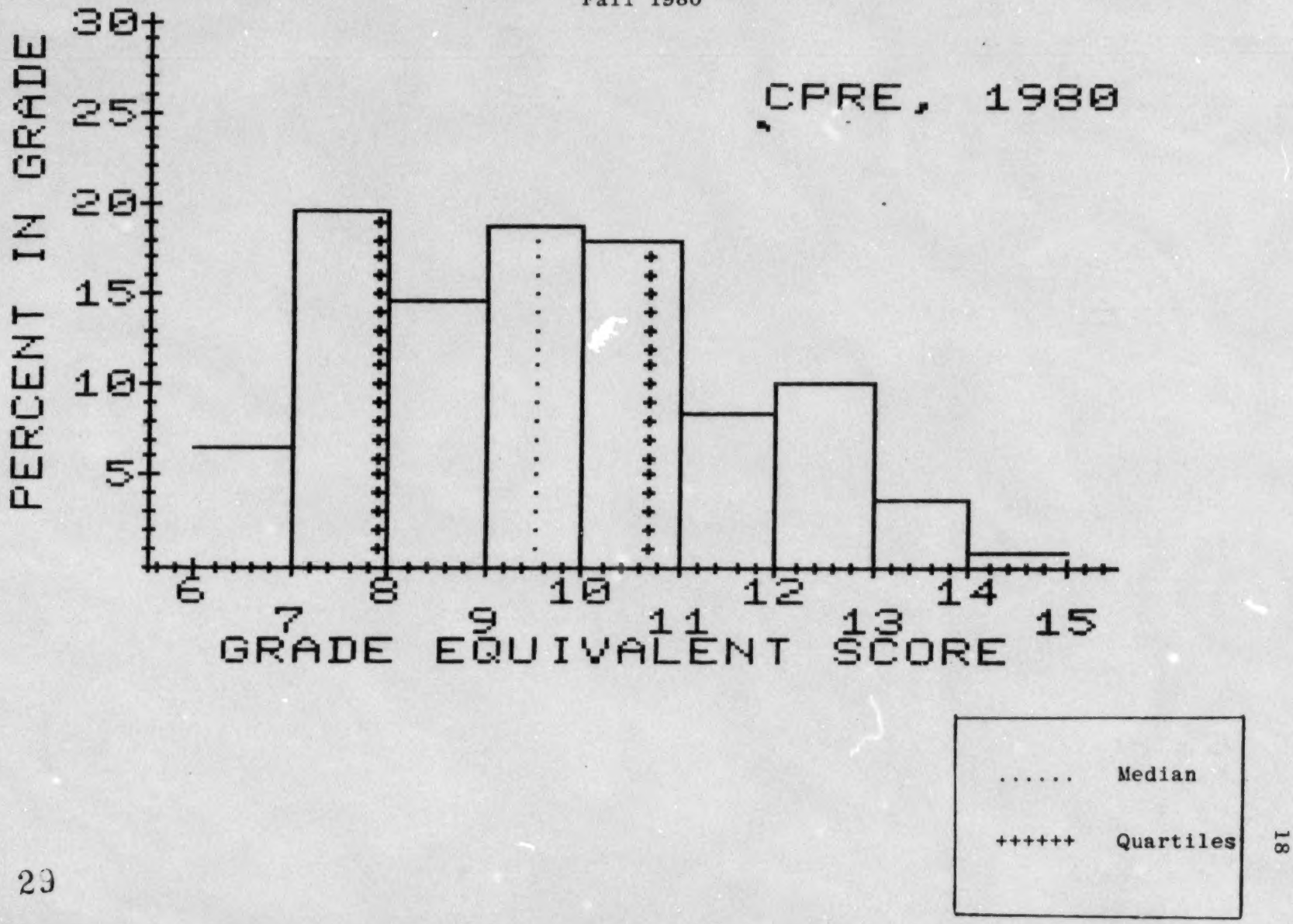
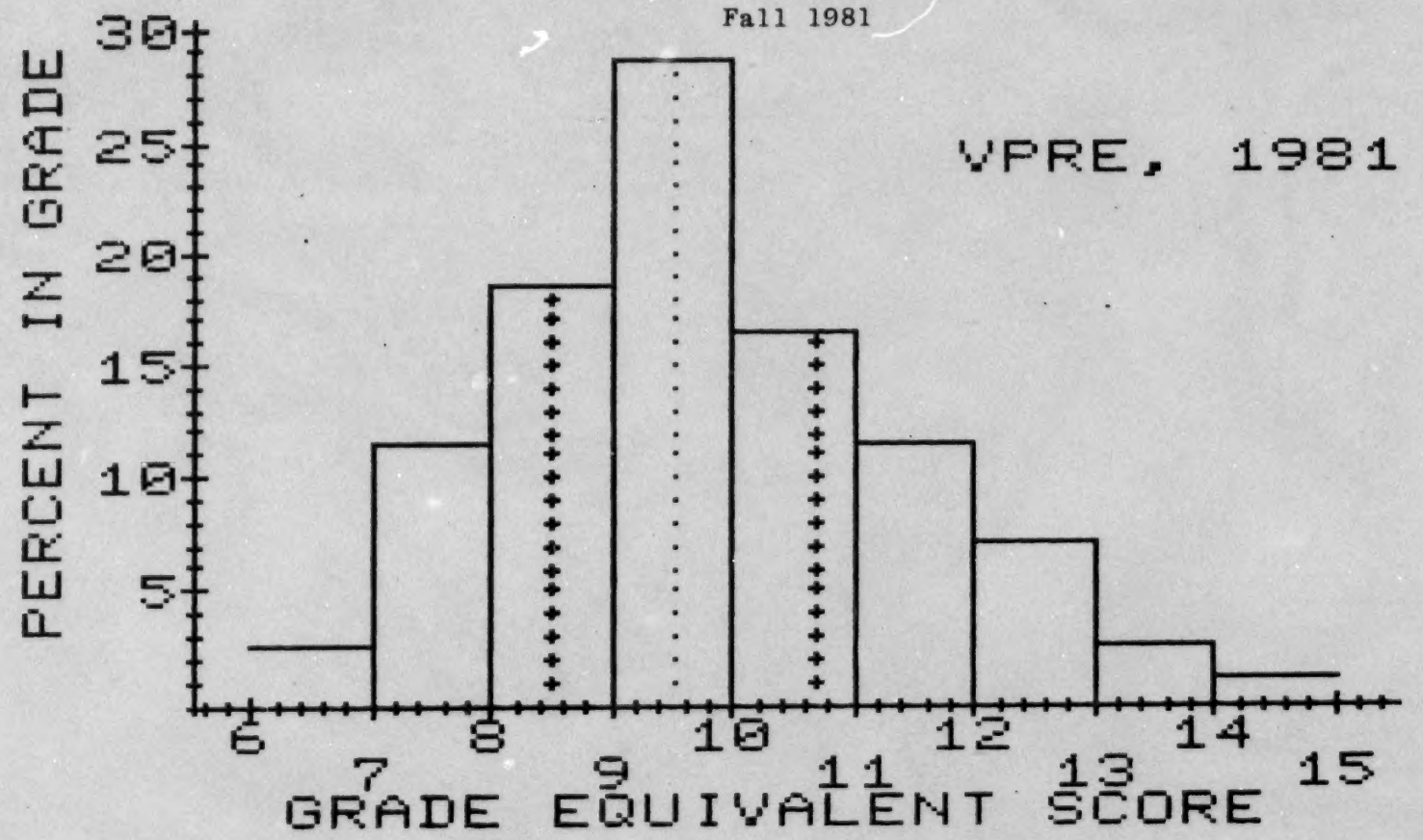


Figure 7

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES VOCABULARY (ALL STUDENTS)

Fall 1981



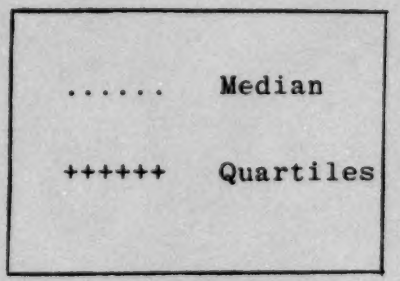
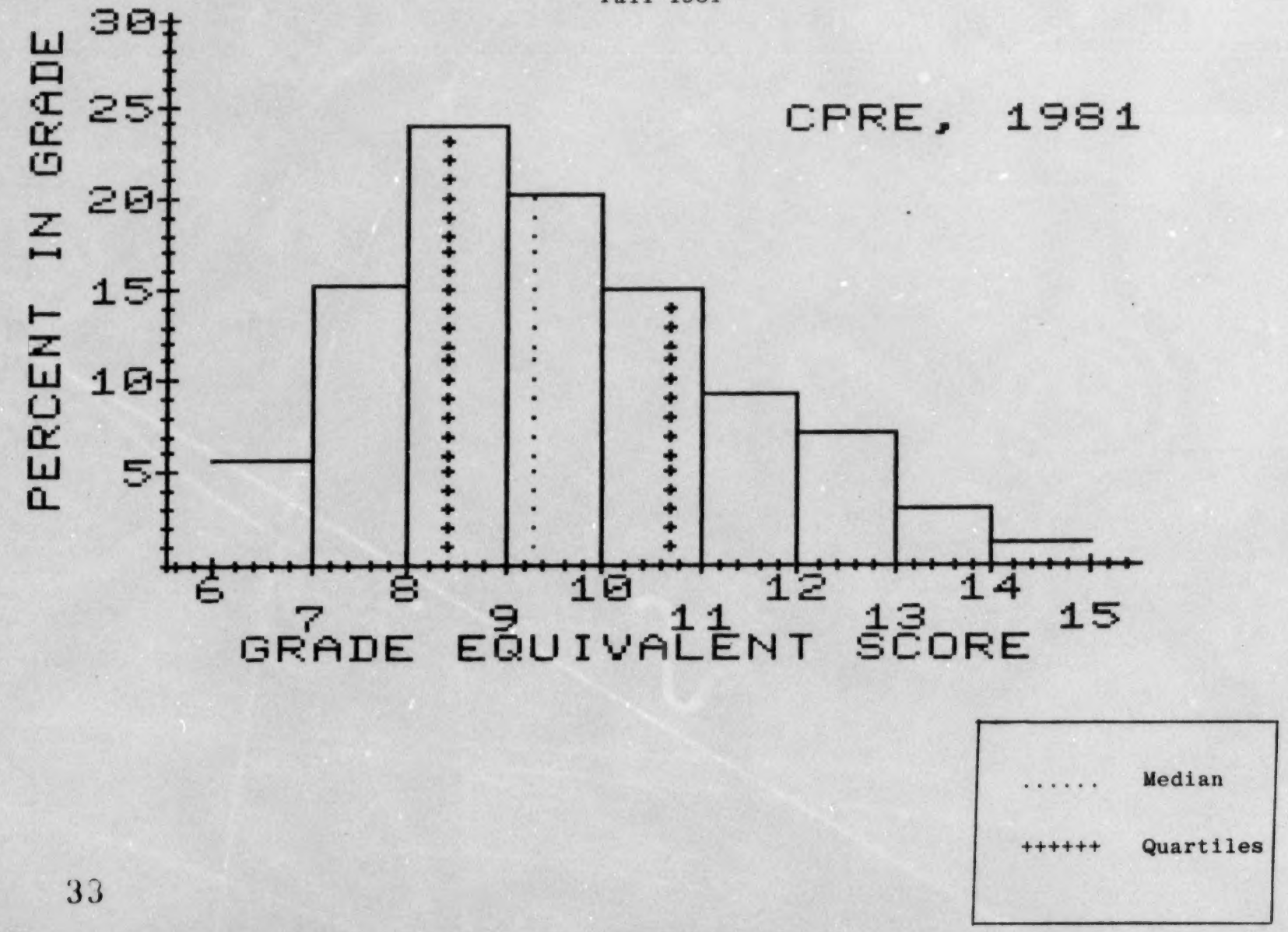


Figure 8

DISTRIBUTION OF PRE-TEST GRADE EQUIVALENCIES COMPREHENSION (ALL STUDENTS)

Fall 1981



percent of the group scored below the level of the sixth month of eleventh grade.

Figure 6 presents the distribution of pre-test comprehension grade equivalencies for all students in both groups in 1980. With a median of 9.5, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the fifth month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the ninth month of seventh grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of tenth grade.

1981 - Figure 7 shows the distribution of pre-test vocabulary grade equivalencies for all students in both groups in 1981. With a median of 9.5, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the fifth month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the fifth month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of tenth grade.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of pre-test comprehension grade equivalencies for all students in both groups in 1981. With a median of 9.3, 50 percent of the group scored below the level of the third month of ninth grade. Twenty-five percent of the group scored below the level of the fourth month of eighth grade, and 75 percent of the group scored below the level of the seventh month of tenth grade.

What gains were made from the pre- to post-test?

1980 and 1981 combined - Table I summarizes pre- and post-test vocabulary and comprehension grade equivalencies, with gain in months,

for the total sample in both years. The overall gain averaged 4 months. The gain for all groups in vocabulary averaged 4.3 months, and the gain for all groups in comprehension averaged 3.6 months. The average of gains for Yellow was 4 months, and the average of gains for White was 5 months.

1980 - Table II summarizes pre- and post-test vocabulary, comprehension, and total grade equivalencies, with gain in months, for students in Fall 1980. The overall gain averaged 5.3 months. The gains for all groups averaged 5.3 months in vocabulary, 4.3 months in comprehension, and 6.3 months in total. The average of gains for Yellow was 5 months, and the average of gains for White was 5.7 months.

1981 - Table III summarizes pre- and post-test vocabulary, comprehension, and total grade equivalencies, with gain in months, for students in Fall 1981. The overall gain averaged 3 months. The gains for all groups averaged 3.7 months in vocabulary, 3 months in comprehension, and 3.3 months in total. The average of gains for Yellow was 2.3 months, and the average of gains for White was 3.7 months.

How did gains differ for students taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow) and students taking 3001 alone (White)?

1980 and 1981 combined - Gains in vocabulary and comprehension made by Yellow in both years and reported in Table I averaged one month less than did gains made by White. The largest gain, 6 months, was made by White in comprehension. The smallest gain, 3 months, was made by Yellow in comprehension.

1980 - Gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and total made by Yellow in 1980 and reported in Table II averaged six-tenths of a month less than did gains made by White. The largest gain, 7 months, was shared by Yellow in vocabulary and White in total. The smallest gain, 2 months, was made by Yellow in comprehension.

1981 - Gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and total made by Yellow in 1981 and reported in Table III averaged 1.4 months less than did gains made by White. The largest gain, 4 months, was shared by Yellow in vocabulary and White in comprehension and total. The smallest gain, 0 months, was recorded for Yellow in comprehension.

Differences in gains made by Yellow and White were determined not to be statistically significant.

How did gains made in Fall 1980 differ from those made in Fall 1981?

An average of of all gains made in 1980 and 1981 and presented in Tables II and III shows the 1980 combined group, with an average gain of 5.3 months, slightly ahead of the 1981 group with an average gain of 3 months.

For all students, the gain in vocabulary was 5 months in both years. In comprehension, the 1980 gain of 4 months was slightly larger than the 1981 gain of 2 months.

Differences in gains were determined not to be statistically significant, and gains did not appear to depend on initital grade equivalencies as determined by pre-test scores.

How did gains differ for students taught by instructors of different academic levels?

Table IV compares the academic level of instructors for all

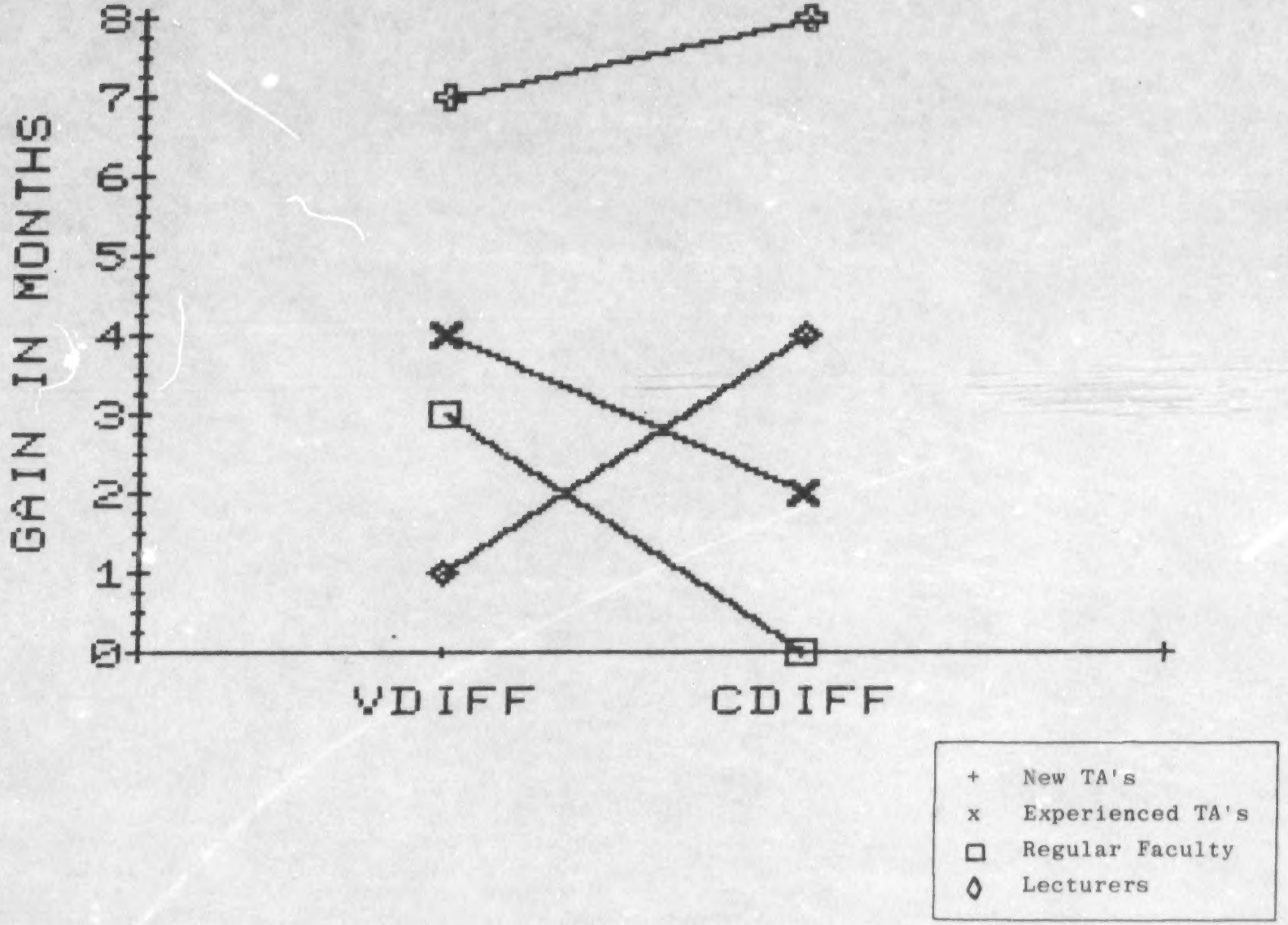
Table IV

Comparison of Pre- to Post-Gain
Number of Students, and Class Size
to Academic Level of Instructor

Academic Level of Instructor	Pre-to Post-Gain (Total:V,C)	Number of Students	Average Class Size
Regular Faculty	4	138	23
Lecturer	4	121	30
Experienced TA	5	176	25
New TA	8	74	15

Figure 9

STUDENT GAIN IN VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION ACCORDING TO ACADEMIC LEVEL OF INSTRUCTOR



25

students in 1980 and 1981 to months of gain in total score, total number of students taught, and average class size. Students taught by new teaching assistants showed a gain of 8 months in total score. Students taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, and regular faculty showed an average gain of 4.3 months.

Experienced teaching assistants taught more students (176) than did any other level of instructor. New teaching assistants taught the smallest number of students (74), and their average class size numbered 15 students. Lecturers had the largest average class size of 30 students.

Figure 9 compares the academic level of instructor with the gain in months in vocabulary and comprehension made by all students in 1980 and 1981 combined. In vocabulary, students taught by lecturers, regular faculty, and experienced teaching assistants gained between 1 and 4 months, while students taught by new teaching assistants gained 7 months. In comprehension, students taught by regular faculty, experienced teaching assistants, and regular faculty gained between zero and 4 months, while students taught by new teaching assistants gained 8 months.

Summary of Results

Grade equivalencies of vocabulary and comprehension pre-test mean scores for all students (524n) upon entrance into 3001 in 1980 and 1981 combined were near the level of mid-ninth grade. On the pre-test, grade equivalencies for students taking 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow; 343n) differed little from those for students taking 3001 alone (White; 181n). While both groups showed the same

grade equivalency in comprehension, White was slightly higher than Yellow in vocabulary. Comprehension scores were lower than vocabulary scores for Yellow, White, and the combined group.

With only slight differences apparent between Yellow and White, the distribution of pre-test vocabulary and comprehension scores for 1980 and 1981 combined showed that at the time of entry into 3001, 75 percent of the students scored below a range from early tenth to late eleventh grade, 50 percent scored below a range from mid-ninth to early tenth grade, and 25 percent scored below the middle of eighth grade.

Overall pre- to post-test gains for all students in 1980 and 1981 combined averaged 4 months.

Comparison of gains between the Yellow and White groups and between 1980 and 1981 showed no statistically significant differences. Yellow showed a smaller gain in comprehension and a larger gain in vocabulary in both years. White showed the larger gain in total score in both years.

In 1980 the overall average gain was 2.3 months more than the overall average gain in 1981.

Comparison of the instructor's academic level to months of gain from pre- to post-test showed gains for students taught by new teaching assistants to be approximately double those made by students taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty. This difference was statistically significant.

Experienced teaching assistants taught the largest group of students, and new teaching assistants taught the smallest. Lecturers

had the largest average class size, and new teaching assistants had the smallest.

IV. Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

Conclusions

Results of the study warranted six major conclusions. For the sample used in this investigation, it was concluded that:

1. The average grade equivalencies in vocabulary and comprehension for all students who entered English 3001 in Fall 1980 and Fall 1981 were near the level of mid-ninth grade, with comprehension lower than vocabulary.
2. Three-fourths of all students who entered English 3001 in both years scored below the level of late eleventh grade in vocabulary and comprehension, while one-half scored below the level of tenth grade, and one-fourth scored below the level of mid-eighth grade.
3. The overall average gain of four months from pre- to post-test for all students in both years corresponded approximately to the time spent in the course.
4. Gains for students who took 3001 and 3110 concurrently (Yellow) did not differ significantly from gains for students who took 3001 alone (White).
5. Gains made in Fall 1980 were slightly but not significantly larger than gains made in Fall 1981.
6. Students taught by new teaching assistants registered larger gains than students taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty.

Discussion

The study emphasized that most students entered English 3001 with reading skills, as measured by vocabulary, comprehension, and total scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, two to five years below thirteenth grade or college-freshman level. It was expected that the verbal skill of reading would be somewhat low in 3001, a course designed primarily for provisional students. However, it was not expected that one-fourth of the students would score at lower than mid-eighth grade level. This information suggests the need for special, intensive training in reading skills for this segment of the sample.

The finding that three-fourths of the sample scored below the level of late eleventh grade underscored the need for instruction that may aid these students in their other courses which require substantial amounts of reading in freshman textbooks, assumed to be on a thirteenth-grade level of difficulty.

The finding that all students in both years averaged an overall gain of four months indicated that gain from pre- to post-test equated roughly to calendar time spent in the classroom. While this indication may seem disquieting, it is interesting to consider that a similar gain, registered from the time of entry into ninth grade until completion of twelfth grade, would produce a total gain of thirty-six months or four years in the course of a secondary school education.

The finding that concurrent enrollment in English 3001 and 3110 did not seem to make a significant difference in gain from pre- to

post-test suggested that variables other than enrollment in specific courses may be responsible in producing growth in reading skills. Furthermore, it seems possible that intensive work in a single course that closely interrelates basic reading and writing skills might tend to increase student gain in these skills.

The slightly lower gains made by students in 1981 indicated that a year of departmental experience in teaching English 3001 probably did not contribute to producing greater student gain in the skills measured by the test. However, it is important to note that, according to the University of Texas at El Paso Statistical Handbook, the average verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test score for all freshmen entering the University in 1981 was three points below that of the same group entering in 1980. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that students included in this study who enrolled in 1981 entered the University slightly less apt in verbal skills than were their counterparts in 1980.

The finding that students taught by new teaching assistants gained more than those taught by experienced teaching assistants, lecturers, or regular faculty suggested three possibilities. First, the smaller average class size characteristic of sections taught by new teaching assistants seems to underscore the desirability of small class sizes in English courses, a long-standing contention of the National Council of Teachers of English. It seems highly possible that the increased opportunity for personal instructor-student contact in a small class could have caused greater student involvement and consequent achievement.

A second possibility may be that classroom experience of teaching of traditional English courses holds little transfer value in dealing with students with a low level of reading skills. It seems possible that experienced instructors may find it necessary to make drastic alterations in their teaching philosophies, techniques, and expectations when working with students whose reading skills are on the level of students involved in this study.

A third possibility lies in the positive effect on students of the enthusiasm usually characteristic of a conscientious beginning teacher aided by the careful planning and supervision of an experienced instructor.

Recommendations

Results of this study warranted recommendations for consideration by the Department of English and by other University faculty.

The following suggestions are recommended for consideration by the Department of English:

1. A standardized reading test should be included as part of the testing procedure for placement of students into Freshman English courses.
2. A special course should be formulated and required for incoming freshmen whose scores on a standardized reading test place them at level below that of the tenth grade. This course should offer remedial reading instruction accompanied by instruction and practice in related basic writing skills. It should be planned and taught, if possible, in cooperation with remedial reading specialists

and their graduate students from the College of Education.

3. A special course should be formulated and required for incoming freshmen whose scores on a standarized reading test place them at a level between tenth and eleventh grade. The course should emphasize instruction in reading of expository materials, particulary textbooks in other disciplines, and should include instructions and practice in related writing skills such as composing of summaries and essay test answers.
4. Both special courses should meet six hours a week and should employ computer-aided instruction and intensive laboratory work. Appropriate exit requirements should be established for both courses, with students being allowed to repeat either course, without grade-point penalty, until they meet exit requirements. Successful attainment of the exit requirements of the second special course should be required before enrollment in English 3111 or 6111.
5. Teaching assistants, under supervision of regular faculty, should be used extensively to teach both special courses, to provide small classes and restrict regular faculty responsibility for these courses to individuals holding a definite interest in and background for such work.

The following recommendations are suggested for consideration by other University faculty whose classes include students similar to the sample in this study:

1. Effort should be made to incorporate the teaching of

appropriate reading techniques and skills in courses which frequently enroll students similar to those in this study. Such effort should be aided by in-service training sessions.

2. A study should be made to determine the feasibility of requiring that students with low achievement in reading and writing skills successfully complete a University-preparation sequence of courses before being allowed to enroll in regular University classes. Such a requirement would be a step toward providing such students with better chances of academic success and toward improving the overall quality of education at the University.

A final recommendation is that a study, similar to the present one but using a different standardized instrument, be conducted to provide date with which to compare the results of this investigation.